



Office of the Sheriff of Harnett County

Sheriff Wayne Coats

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Reference Griggs V. Chisenhall (Civil Case)

The jury has spoken in the civil trial – and we cannot forget that the civil justice system is a means to justice – not every case warrants criminal charges, especially where the suspected crime cannot be proved to the extent that justice requires – and at those times, the civil justice aspect of our system of justice is the proper place.

But we must also remember that the proof required in each aspect of the justice system is different also. In a criminal case proof must meet the highest standard of proof known to the law, proof beyond a reasonable doubt. As law enforcement officers, when we do not believe the proof reaches that highest standard, we confer with the District Attorney. In this matter the opinion of both agencies is that the highest burden of proof, beyond a reasonable doubt, cannot be met.

In the civil justice context, the standard of proof is far lower, a mere preponderance of the evidence. The evidence in this case met that standard in the minds of the jurors – that liability was more likely than not.

Yet, that standard is not the criminal justice standard — and all of the evidence produced in the investigation – and even in the civil trial does not meet the criminal justice standard as applied in these circumstances. No matter how we might think it should be or even if some would like for it to be different, real justice requires the same law to be applied in each unique case just as in any other case, whether we like the result or not.

Wayne A. Coats,

Sheriff of Harnett County